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A World Ruled By Unknowns:
The Psychological Effects of the Supernatural and Natural
Worlds in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

English Honors Thesis
Jordan Cymrot

Spring 2020

Acknowledgements

The year long journey that this thesis has taken me on, provided me with a time in my academic career I will not forget. My hope is that my love for literature has been represented to the fullest capacities and that my passion is exemplified through the words of this project. I discovered my love for classic literature only a few years ago and this love has continued to manifest today, completing an Undergraduate Thesis on both an author and book that I admire immensely. This thesis took place in the final year of completing my Bachelor's Degree and it was by far the most difficult and the most rewarding project I have completed.

I remember first stepping into Professor Stephanie Hershinow's British Literature class last year, being mesmerized and joyfully overwhelmed by her evident love for literature. The way in which she talked about all the same authors I adored and respected, I knew her class would leave an imprint on my education and mindset. Taking Professor Hershinow's class happened to be the same semester I read *Wuthering Heights* for the first time. After taking her class and reading this novel, I knew I wanted to do more than just move onto the next book. I wanted to research and dedicate time to further unveil this novel, and Professor Hershinow was the sole person I wanted to embark on this project with. She pushed me farther and harder than I knew I was capable of, and she always knew the right moment to critique a sentence I had written and when to throw in a break for some laughs. Her insight on literature and this novel is captivating, and I will forever be grateful for the time spent talking to her and hearing any and all her thoughts on anything, not restricted to this thesis alone. This project is something I will hold with me forever, and I am grateful to her that we can share that.

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Abstract

Emily Brontë (1818-1848) wrote *Wuthering Heights* in 1847 at a point of collision between Romantic thought and Victorian ideals. Her novel exemplifies a developed and deliberate effort to represent a world ruled by forces out of one's control, the most evident example of this being the supernatural force that overtakes the novel. In her precise focus on the language and natural landscape that bind this novel together, her characters emerge as representative of the psychological complexity produced by the coexistence of the mundane and the extraordinary. My thesis focuses on the effects of the natural landscape and the forces that at times control it, but I also look at the psychological effects that these forces have on, in particular, the novel's two main characters: Cathy and Heathcliff. Emily Brontë immersed these two characters in the natural world, highlighting their triumphs and tumultuous love. In better understanding this connection, I first look at the power behind nature, the supernatural forces governed by a Romantic aesthetic concept known as the sublime. After situating this novel in its literary historical context, I continue to move my analysis closer to the characters, looking specifically at Cathy and Heathcliff and showing both their individual and shared relationships with the natural world and the supernatural. I conclude in my last chapter of this thesis by returning to nature, revealing it to be a character as well. Overall, I read Brontë's only novel as both grounded in its historical context (in its perpetuation of Romantic ideals and aesthetics) and forward-thinking in its imagining of new possibilities for engaging with the world.

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Introduction:

My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees—my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath

—a source of little visible delight, but necessary.

—Cathy Earnshaw, in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* has been deemed a “romantic” Victorian novel by scholarship since the novel's publication in 1847. In nearly every introduction to the book, there is certainty that the reader can find a sentence describing the novel that emphasizes the romance that two of the main characters have. Describing the novel, Everyman's Library writes in the second sentence of its description, “The windswept moors are the unforgettable setting of this tale of the tormented love between the foundling Heathcliff and his wealthy benefactor's daughter, Catherine Earnshaw” (Introduction W.H.). The above quotation from the novel, which serves as my epigraph, encapsulates this idea vividly, as Cathy emphasizes the durability of her love for Heathcliff. The novel undoubtedly can be read through a romantic lens; however, in order to get a deeper understanding into the novel's core, it is much more beneficial to focus one's attention on the “windswept moors” than the “tormented love” described in the above quote. By focusing on this novel through the lens not of romance but of “Romanticism,” the reader will be able to take away an account of this novel that recognizes the supernatural forces at work behind repeated representations of natural phenomena. When viewing this novel as “romantic,” one is able to observe the emphasis on love between characters in the novel, the

most evident relationship being between Cathy and Heathcliff. My aim in this thesis, however, is to prove that a “Romantic” viewpoint, which views the novel as the product of the Romantic movement, is necessary for the discovery of a new layer—a layer that recognizes the supernatural as a dominating force not only in the natural world but in human psychology as well.

Before saying more about the indebtedness of *Wuthering Heights* to Romanticism, I want first to provide a brief account of that crucial literary historical era. The Romantic movement is widely agreed to have begun around the year 1770, ending with the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837 (David 72). It was, among a number of other elements, a literary movement that focused on the individual. The emphasis on embracing the power of nature and using naturalistic (rather than elevated or formal) language are two major concepts that Romantic poets and authors would focus their attention on in their works. Two of these poets were Samuel T. Coleridge and William Wordsworth. The two would write poetry whilst being out in nature experiencing the world, manifesting the movement of Romantic thought that would later revolutionize a period in literary history with a collection of poetry titled *Lyrical Ballads*, first published in 1798. In the co-written Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge mentions his motives behind the work. One of the answers he gives to how his poetry turned out the way it did—in terms of subject, language, and plot—is that he aimed to return poetry to nature, while emphasizing the individual’s response to and interaction with the natural world. Coleridge, without realizing it, defines not only his own writing, but the writing of what soon would become the Romantic movement. He explains the process by which he and Wordsworth came to write *Lyrical Ballads*:

The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural, and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life...In this idea originated the plan of the "Lyrical Ballads;" in which it was agreed, that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least Romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. (Preface Coleridge).

Coleridge is suggesting, as would many other Romantic poets and writers, that the presence of a supernatural force is rooted deeply in Romanticism. He states first how supernaturalism can be literal and explicit in one form of poetry. If we use the supernatural as a mode of deep access to human psychology, we can better understand how and why characters in novels respond and react the ways they do to extraordinary phenomena. The second point that Coleridge makes discusses poems that depicted the supernatural as a more figurative element in real life depictions, scenes of everyday life. Coleridge suggests that "ordinary life" might be a place where the supernatural might reside, such as is depicted in the moors Cathy and Heathcliff escape to and in the winter storms that take place throughout *Wuthering Heights*. Yet, I will suggest that both of these possibilities for Romantic supernaturalism (both the literal depiction of

supernatural events and the more evocative suggestion of the supernatural in the ordinary world) are united in Brontë's novel.

As my examples here begin to indicate, my aim is to represent how Brontë takes these approaches to the Romantic literary project and combines them within her novel. She balances both the deep human psychological enquiries that arise from the presence of the supernatural, while also placing those investigations within the landscape of an ostensibly civilized world. Combining these two represents the power that Brontë showcases with respect to the supernatural and the emphasis and control that is placed on it within the lives of each character in the novel and the natural world that surrounds them. The role of nature in Brontë's novel is another key focus and one that is closely associated with the Romantic movement and its invocation of the supernatural. One of the key points I plan to examine more closely in respect to Brontë's deliberate representation of the "other" (that is, those who deviate from social norms) is the form in which the supernatural manifests in this novel. There is no disputing the influences the Romantic era had on Brontë. Throughout this thesis, I aim to demonstrate how these influences arise in the form of the supernatural, and how the supernatural coexists and responds to nature, forming a relationship that uniquely effects the lives of each character in different ways throughout the novel.

Of course, *Wuthering Heights* is, literally speaking, a Victorian novel. The Victorian period began when Queen Victoria took the crown in 1837 and lasted until 1901 with her death, and the Romantic movement ended when the new ideals and focus of English life shifted with the change of monarchical power and the cultural influence of Victoria's reign. The novel was published in 1847, only 10 years after the Victorian Era began. This sheds light on how close this

novel was to the Romantic thought that circulated in literature at the time, also emphasizing the fact that when Emily was writing her novel between the years of 1845-1846, Romanticism was flourishing and manifesting in much of the literature she had been reading. When the Victorian era began and particular ideals of the era took precedence, there began to be a shift in the mindset of everyday life and people, including a heavy emphasis on the hardships and conflicts that everyday people were facing. Concurrently, the literary movement of realism edged out the former investment in supernaturalism. Realism, as its name suggests, is a focus on the realistic aspects of life, representing things as they really were. Victorian writers were less interested in the psychological effects of haunting or demonic possession and more interested in chronicling large-scale social movements and uprisings. They tended to focus less on questions of spirituality and more on the depiction of progressive movements around issues of gender, class, and labor. Elaine Freedgood describes realism and explains the various ways realism was viewed as both a genre and movement in literature at this time. One of the conventions of Realism, as she explains, was Victorian authors' heavy focus on interpreting the world around them and writing about that world with a view toward social change. She states, "Many novelists were clearly as interested in shaping reality as they were in reflecting it" (Freedgood 327). She goes on to give examples from prominent writers at the time, such as Dickens, Trollope, and Gaskell. Due to the influx of change in the everyday, marked foremost by industrialization, there arose an excited need to write about daily life, to showcase this new way of life. Freedgood goes on to explore how realism "seems to be unduly focused on the novel... because in the literary criticism of the period, 'Realism' is broadly coincident with the novel itself, which is defined, as it often is now, against the 'romance'" (Freedgood 328). Romance, as she suggests, is heavily idealized literary

form (centering on noble characters, elevated language, and tidy conclusions), which is a characteristic that goes against the fundamental principles of realism. Freedgood's observation is key to my argument because Emily Brontë is not looking to shed light on the everyday. She also is not chiefly trying to focus attention on the romantic relationship of Cathy and Heathcliff, nor does she want to idealize their relationship. Brontë is instead looking to shed light on a new world and one that is dominated by many of the very aspects that realism refutes. In other words, *Wuthering Heights* is far from realistic in its tendency to depict nature rather than social problems, and its emphasis on the language used in describing nature's relationship with the characters and the supernatural. Brontë wasn't looking to showcase life as it actually was; rather, she wanted to represent a world that realism disregards—a world that encapsulated the idea that anything is possible.

Before further explaining why this novel should be read through a supernatural point of view, it is important to understand what the novel *Wuthering Heights* is about and how it is structured. One of the more complex aspects of the novel is its continuous switch in narrative time. The novel starts and ends in the present but goes back in time throughout. Lockwood, one of the main narrators in the novel, is a wealthy man intending to spend a year at Thrushcross Grange; instead, he finds his way to Wuthering Heights on a stormy winter's night. He is greeted coldly by the people residing in the house, especially the head of the household, the brooding Heathcliff. After being shown his room to stay for the night and falling asleep, he is woken by what can only be the sound of a young woman's voice. He is frightened and calls for help from Heathcliff, setting off a frenzy in the house. Nelly, the main narrator and eyewitness to all that goes on between the other characters, takes over the novel's narrative by telling Lockwood the

tale of Heathcliff and Cathy, the woman whose voice Lockwood presumably heard. The novel goes back in time now, with Nelly telling the story of the Earnshaw family. The book continues with a focus on Cathy Earnshaw and Heathcliff, then a young orphan who Mr. Earnshaw brought to Wuthering Heights to raise and civilize. Soon after Heathcliff is brought into the home, however, Cathy's father dies, leaving Heathcliff unprotected from the sole son of the house, Hindley.

As Cathy and Heathcliff grow up, more details about the landscape are described, while also adding more insight into the naturalistic qualities possessed by their characters. Trouble begins when Cathy meets Edgar Linton, a character who represents the conventional life that Cathy deems she must have. As the story progresses, the repressed relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff gets more and more complicated, the two forming a tumultuous relationship that—many arguments, fits, and marriages later—results in Cathy's death. The story goes back to the present, showing how much has changed since Cathy died. Heathcliff took control of Wuthering Heights, and he takes care of Cathy's daughter (Catherine), his own son, and Hareton, Hindley's son. The book produces, in other words, a second generation of the three main characters. While the novel continues, my main focus throughout this thesis will be on the first generation of the characters—especially Cathy and Heathcliff—and how the two coexist with the supernatural elements in the novel and the natural landscape that each embodies.

Understanding the key aspects of this novel and how much it differs from other novels written at this time is important in helping us see the legacy of the Romantic movement. Writing early in the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf shares how Brontë's novel is so unlike other novels of the time; in particular, she gives examples of Emily's sisters' novels, such as *Jane Eyre* and

Agnes Grey, contrasting the two with *Wuthering Heights*. But even more so, she explains the meaning behind *Wuthering Heights* as a novel. It moves past the first-person retrospective form of those other novels to capture something bigger:

But there is no “I” in *Wuthering Heights*. There are no governesses. There are no employers. There is love, but it is not the love of men and women. Emily was inspired by some more general conception. The impulse which urged her to create was not with her own suffering or her own injuries. She looked upon a world cleft into gigantic disorder and felt within her the power to unite it in a book. The giant ambition is to be felt throughout the novel—a struggle, half thwarted but of superb conviction, to say something through the mouths of her characters which is not merely “I love” or “I hate” but “we the whole human race” and “You the eternal powers” (Woolf 54).

Besides comparing the three Brontë sisters’ writing style and subject, Woolf pays special attention to the technique and particularity of Emily’s voice in the novel. Woolf recognizes the extra step Emily Brontë is successfully taking in revolutionizing Romantic writing along with the presence of the supernatural. Woolf and Coleridge (as we saw before) are both shedding light into the heart of what Emily Brontë was getting at in her novel and what she wanted to represent: the simultaneous clarity and mystery represented in respect to nature’s force and the supernatural element in Brontë’s novel. Although there at first seems to be a juxtaposition between “clarity” and “mystery”, Brontë is actually putting forth a new interpretation of the supernatural in nature, an idea that revolutionized the understanding of power that the Romantic period held in respect to forces that one cannot control. The extra step that Woolf is referring to is Brontë’s choice to write a novel showcasing the supernatural within the context of the natural world, without human

interference. *Wuthering Heights* is a novel that has characters that are completely submissive to a force that they can neither explain or completely understand. They all, including Heathcliff and Cathy, fall subject to the force of this entity and the only two options left to them are to embrace the controlled force or live in torment. There is no denying the existence because this supernatural presence will not allow itself to be absent or forgotten. It is impossible to read this novel without one's own psychological mindset being tampered with, thus emphasizing a lack of control that stems from inside the novel but is able to transcend to the lives of the readers as well. This novel is key to understanding the longer history of the Romantic movement, and Woolf is insightful enough to highlight this. My suggestion is that although this novel was published in an era of realistic writing, it is fair to say that this novel is the epitome of the Romantic novel.

Chapter 1: Supernaturalism and the Sublime

The supernatural element and the depiction of nature and the natural world are at the heart of Brontë's focus. Brontë is bringing together the forces of nature in a world where supernatural powers (primarily being represented in the weather and natural landscape so frequently described) rule, and over which the characters have little to no control. There is a specific and deliberate relationship between nature and the supernatural that is explored throughout the novel, but in my argument I will look more closely at how nature is able to take the role of a character through the supernatural, specifically through a concept known as the sublime. M.H. Abrams looks closely at supernaturalism in literature as a force and presence. While Abrams is more attentive to texts traditionally aligned with Romanticism, this phenomenon is evident in Brontë's novel as well, there being recognition of a great uncontrollable entity that takes hold of the characters and plot of the novel. As Abrams suggests when looking closely at William Wordsworth's *The Prelude*:

Opposite types are the awe-inspiring and terrifying aspects of nature—vast scenes of wildness and majesty, the "awful" and the "grand," elements "in tumult," "the midnight storm," "the roaring ocean and waste wilderness," which act on the mind by "terror" and by "pain and fear" and manifest not nature's "love" but her punitive actions: her "impressive discipline of fear" (Abrams 97).

All the qualities that Abrams describes in the above quotation are vital aspects of this novel. It is also important to recognize that Abrams is connecting and using words that insist on the external and internal forces at play throughout the novel. There is a constant sense of uncertainty that the

characters as well as the readers feel whenever a scene in nature occurs. The uneasy and eerie description of nature throughout scenes in the novel reveals a hidden uncertainty the reader feels and even at times questions, asking themselves: who is in control here? The idea of control and power within the supernatural relates closely to the concept known as the sublime. The sublime as defined by first-century rhetorician Longinus is a “significant source of pleasure, one that is distinguishable from beauty, for the experience of the sublime involves astonishment, alarm, and even fear” (Black 70). Many characteristics of the sublime are present in Brontë’s novel. Astonishment, alarm, and fear are all present within the characters of the novel, especially in scenes that involve nature.

Edmund Burke’s book, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1757, looks more closely at the sublime, a concept relevant to Brontë’s novel in regards to the “otherness” that is unidentifiable and surrounds the supernatural presence within the natural world. The ability to identify the sublime is a key component to not only the landscape surrounding Wuthering Heights but the character of Heathcliff as well, a component I will look at more closely in Chapter 2. The sublime is a type of aesthetic and, as Burke suggests, a type of experience one might encounter:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort of terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling (Burke 36).

In saying this, Burke is suggesting that sublime is a sort of reaction involving feelings of being overcome and paralyzed by an experience, an experience that is so powerful, so astonishing,

possibly even horrifying that one feels quite minuscule in comparison. For Burke, the concept is not just an aesthetic one (a reaction to an art object), but a response to nature and natural occurrences. Focusing on nature specifically, however, as a force that invokes a mysterious and unidentifiable presence that overpowers the lives of every character in the book, is key to better understanding the presence of the supernatural. There is not one character by the end of the novel who hasn't in some shape or form been touched by this force and presence. There is a continual emphasis on the natural world being a sublime medium in the novel. The novel is set in the winter with terrible snow storms, thunderstorms, wind, rain, and a feeling of eternal darkness. Burke discusses in depth how scenes such as these are prime places for the sublime to emerge, for example the darkness described in the landscape and the scenes pertaining to night. Burke would describe darkness as something "capable of producing the sublime" and that "darkness is more productive of sublime ideas than light" (Burke 73). Most of the scenes where the weather is bad involves the nighttime. There is also a sense that nature overpowers any and all that stand in the way.

The recognition of the supernatural is necessary in understanding why Brontë wrote through a Romantic mindset in her novel. By being able to identify the supernatural in the novel, the reader is able to begin to grasp the power and uncanniness that dominates everyone and everything present in the novel, and also is representative of one of the key elements driving Romantic thought. When occurrences such as the winter storms take place, the description of characters and any other tangible plot-driven aspects are completely absent. This is due to the supernatural force being implemented in the writing. Brontë's deliberateness behind this is evident and represents the powerful, absolute attitude that nature holds in the novel. Nature is not

the only entity that is being recognized here, however; there is clearly a force that overtakes not only all the characters, but the world that encapsulates the novel as well. One of the early on examples of this is in the beginning of the novel as Mr. Lockwood notices upon his arrival at Wuthering Heights, and there begins to be a change in the weather. He states: “A sorrowful sight I saw: dark night coming down prematurely, and sky and hills mingled in one bitter whirl of wind and suffocating snow” (W.H. 20). This scene is right before the snow storm takes control. In this scene, the supernatural takes the form of nature; this indicating how the supernatural elements within this novel are driven by the strong relationship and reliance it has to the natural world. The two form an unsurpassable entity that dominates the novel within the understanding of Romantic thought, relaying the power the two hold. Nature and the natural occurrences represented in the novel form a power-relationship with the supernatural, a concept M.H. Abrams calls “Natural Supernaturalism.” Abrams suggests that Natural Supernaturalism is “in diverse degrees... a way to naturalize the supernatural and humanize the divine” (Abrams 66). This definition closely aligns with the ideas brought forward in Brontë’s novel. The most evident moments in the novel where the supernatural can be recognized are through key natural occurrences.

It is also important to recognize that when these occurrences occur, the only two characters that notice and accept the supernatural presence are Catherine and Heathcliff, the two main characters whose existences are cemented within nature and the love they have for one another. The most paramount example of this is when Catherine is comparing her love for Linton and Heathcliff. She states to Nelly,

I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is, or should be an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of creation if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I wanted and felt each from the beginning; my great though in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees—my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath — a source of little visible delight, but necessary (W.H. 93).

The language Brontë assigns to Catherine such as “My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods...” and “my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath...” breathes Romanticism and, in so many words, Brontë is allowing Catherine to ask far more than what love is and how it feels. She is having Catherine ask what it means to exist, and the only way Catherine is permitted to ask these questions is by grounding them in her understanding of nature. Brontë is suggesting that, without nature, the existence of human feeling and love are not nearly as powerful as when the two are aligned. Brontë is using nature as a way of pushing forward human emotion. The language suggests an extreme view on reverting back to becoming one with nature, a signifying element of Romanticism. Brontë goes much farther in using nature to describe the two men that Catherine is torn between. By doing this, the reader is able to grasp the weight and magnitude of these two men in how Cathy not only describes them, but loves them. There is clearly a heaviness and added weight that is associated with Heathcliff's character while Linton's character is described as more light and always-changing. The cyclical changing

of the seasons and the “eternal” concept of the weight that nature holds on earth is put in a metaphor about two characters, but expands further to represent human emotion with respect to nature. Brontë is able, with both Cathy and Heathcliff, to represent the vital existence and the recognition of the supernatural and how these two characters along with anybody else in the novel would cease in importance without this presence and recognition. One of the earliest examples of this is when the story opens up and Heathcliff is the owner of Wuthering Heights. He purposely buys the house in an attempt to be closer to Cathy after she marries Edgar but later, after she dies, he still keeps the house in order to keep as much of her presence as close to him as possible. Heathcliff’s choice in keeping the house is representative of the fact that he still believes Cathy’s presence is in the house although she may not physically be there.

Another aspect of key importance in this novel is a sense of place, a concept that Brontë investigates deeper within her novel. By writing through a Romantic lens, Brontë introduces and represents supernaturalism as a driving force in the novel. Anne Williams, in “Natural Supernaturalism in *Wuthering Heights*”, looks even further into the relationships formed in the novel. She argues about a specific love that is present in the novel and explains how it is much more than the romantic relationship that Cathy and Heathcliff form. Instead, Williams is arguing that the love the two have is only able to occur because the natural world and nature is so present in their relationship. She argues there is a specific “aesthetic strategy”; in the case of *Wuthering Heights*, that strategy is situating Cathy and Heathcliff’s love within the boundaries of nature, a method Brontë uses to validate the supernatural and “mythical.” Cathy and Heathcliff form their love through connections with nature, this being one of the reasons why they are continually displayed outdoors. Williams suggests later on in the argument that:

Like Wordsworth and Coleridge in the *Lyrical Ballads*, Brontë offers the reader, in various portions of her book, the two ways of grasping the interrelationship of the natural and the supernatural— by humanizing the latter, or by using characters' imagination-charged perceptions to lend an eerie enchantment to the former—and always the truth of nature and giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of the imagination (Williams 109).

Williams is suggesting here that in order to see and understand the relationship that characters have with nature, it is important to look out for two indicating factors: 1. To find humanization within the natural world and 2. To look closely at the actual character and read through their own imagination and point of view. The two ways are both accurate in how readers are able to grasp the significance that nature and the natural world has on relationships within the novel. The quote also represents another aspect: the continual changing time represented by the narrative structure. The novel goes from day to night, stormy to sunny, throughout the novel—constantly adding specific characters into the mix when changes in the weather or day occur. For example, the reader is only able to see Heathcliff's true self when it is either stormy or night time; it is rare that Brontë discusses his character in full detail when the weather is nice or during the daytime sections described in the novel as well. Williams is suggesting that by investigating the realms of the everyday lives of the characters, readers are given more clarity into the connection between the naturalistic world and the actions and mindsets of the characters.

The presence of the supernatural is not only readily active and identifiable throughout the novel through nature, but it is able to overpower the characters themselves. One of the first questions Burke asks in regards to the sublime is, "Does it bring us down to earth, or link us with

the divinity of the skies? Does it enlarge us or diminish us?" (Burke Introduction XVIII). The remainder of his book attempts to answer these questions. Burke ultimately concludes his book by stating that the sublime is able to produce all of these effects and responses in light of the inhuman entities faced. Burke recognizes from the beginning of his inquiry, similarly to the realizations Brontë represents in her novel, that the depiction of the sublime leads to an unending number of unsolvable questions. Brontë however, attempts answering many of the posed questions in Burke's work within her novel.

In the case of *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine and Heathcliff have the closest connections with sublime experiences. One of the earliest examples, however, is when Mr. Lockwood in the very beginning of the novel awakes to feel the hands of the late Catherine holding onto him through the window: "Terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes" (W.H. 27). Lockwood's first response ("Terror made me cruel") is especially important in respect to the sublime. Part II of Burke's book devotes a section to terror:

No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain. Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror, be endued with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on (Burke 53).

Burke suggests that terror makes one frozen or immobile, not cruel. Brontë is using the concept of terror to shed a light on a different psychological effect terror can produce in the case of Mr.

Lockwood. It is important to recognize that Lockwood is having an experience that is new. Brontë is reworking the definition of terror in a way that complements the sublime's reaction with nature. The sublime overcomes Mr. Lockwood when he believes the ghost of Catherine grabs his hands. He is so affected by this experience that in an attempt to exert control of the situation, he falls subject to the sublime instead.

While Lockwood attempts to claim more control when confronted by the power of the sublime, Cathy and Heathcliff instead give into it. Heathcliff for example, has a sublime experience later on in the novel once Catherine has died. He prophetically shouts:

Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living. You said I killed you—haunt me then. The murdered do haunt their murderers. I believe—I know that ghosts have wandered the earth. Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad. Only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! It is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul! (W.H. 191-192).

This passage represents the welcoming attitude Heathcliff has towards the supernatural. He doesn't go so far as merely stating his desire for Cathy to come to him; rather his language suggests he will not be able to live until he has had the same experience Lockwood had—that is, an experience of haunting. His language, such as “drive me mad” and “haunt me then,” takes on a whole new form and erupts out of Heathcliff's character representing the desire and need he possesses to be united with Cathy once again. The sublime response to nature in the novel is also representative of forces that can only be embraced by Heathcliff with his recognition of natural occurrences. The scene begins with Heathcliff in the bedroom of the late Cathy but ends with his running outside to try and find her. The scene being pushed out-of-doors and into nature is

representative of the novel's urge to push the reader out into nature, just as Heathcliff himself is being pushed to find Cathy. The only way he can find her however, is to embrace the supernatural presence where Cathy resides. It is evident that Cathy and, especially, Heathcliff are meant to be represented as an alignment with the supernatural forces that manifest throughout the novel. This plays out in examples such as this one with Heathcliff, where not only are the characters asking to be aligned with the supernatural, they demand it.

The idea of the human imagination is cultivated through the characters of Cathy and Heathcliff whenever they are out in nature, succumbed to the power of the supernatural. It is the site of where they consummate their love, but, more importantly, it is where all their childhood dreams and make-believe stories become a reality. One of the key moments where imagination comes into play is when Cathy and Heathcliff are out on the moors discussing their roles and how Cathy is the queen and Heathcliff the king. Cathy is making presumptions about Heathcliff's background when she says: "Who knows, but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together. And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors, and brought to England" (W.H. 65). This is an important moment in the novel that also looks at Heathcliff's lack of a sense of place, a concept I look more closely at in Chapter 2. It is important here, however, because this make-believe talk begins due to the terrible treatment Heathcliff receives at home from Hindley, the new head of the house. Cathy and Heathcliff escape this cruelty and resort to the moors where they can pretend they are far away and are queen and king.

Another idea that Brontë introduces in her novel is the existence of more than one powerful entity, for example the dual presence of both the supernatural and religion. Brontë looks closely at how these two entities relate and interact in both the characters and the plot of the novel. Brontë does not dispute that there is a God in the world of *Wuthering Heights*, nor does she affirm this. There is a sort of ambiguity within the novel in regards to religion and the importance it holds. What Brontë does focus on is the awareness and acceptance that there are multiple forces that rule the world of her novel but that the supernatural element is equal in importance to those other factors. This is a revolutionary idea because Brontë is purposely choosing not to dismiss one entity over another. She doesn't simply state that the supernatural is the only force that controls the world of this novel, rather, she introduces a new idea that there can and are multiple factors that govern this world and that the coexistence of these factors is possible. Brontë is able to depict the supernatural through nature as a way of better grasping the power and force that it holds on the world of this novel but the scenes of weather and the natural phenomena are not the only times the supernatural is represented. Unlike the forces pertaining to religion, the supernatural forces are represented through already strong entities. Brontë's choosing to put this force within another force, heightens the power, but also the control that the power obtains.

One of the most poignant examples of the recognition of supernatural power in regards to religion is the character of Joseph in the novel. Joseph is the old servant who has been at *Wuthering Heights* since both Catherine and Heathcliff were very young and is still around when Mr. Lockwood arrives. He is also very difficult to understand; his Yorkshire dialect is at times impenetrable; however, it is his ideas with respect to religion that lack sense. Joseph is the prime

voice of Christianity in this novel. His ability to voice his ideas is nearly incomprehensible and yet nearly every time he does speak, it is either in prayer to God or wishing God's presence on one of more of the other characters. One of the most evident examples of this is the night when Heathcliff runs away after hearing only part of Catherine's speech about loving him. Cathy is in the middle of talking to Nelly about Heathcliff and her speech starting off by insulting him, soon turns into her professing her love and the realization she has that she can never live without him. Heathcliff runs away in the middle of this speech before hearing the end. It is the middle of the night when Cathy begins to be in hysterics about Heathcliff running away and hearing her, and Joseph says in response, "This visitation worn't for nowt, und aw wod hev ye tuh look aht, Miss, —yah muh be t' next. Thank Hivin for all! All warks together for gooid tuh them as is choozen, and piked aht froo' th' rubbidge! Yah know whet t' Scripture ses—" (W.H. 97). Joseph's dialect requires effort from Brontë's readers. What is interesting here is that Brontë only allows for Joseph to speak about religion and God in any form of his speech, this signifying that the supernatural presence in the novel is easier to understand and at times, overpowers the religious recognition in the novel.

Brontë's ability to recognize religion in the same presence of the supernatural is evident, but the way in which she uses Joseph to speak about religion indicates Brontë's persistence and Romantic perception of the two entities. References to God and religion are completely absent in the dialect of any of the other characters, and yet comments that Joseph speaks about God or "Hivin", are overlooked and rather Cathy and Heathcliff's speeches and outings take precedence. We could interpret this scene as an uneducated, old servant that cannot be understood and simply speaks to himself throughout the novel, but that would be doing this critical detail a disservice

when looking at Joseph as a character. Brontë uses Joseph's comments on religion as indications of a presence, but one that need not be as clearly understood as that of the supernatural. We can see this in the fact that, while Joseph is talking and says the above quotation, there is a great storm occurring:

About midnight, while we [Nelly and Joseph] still sat up, the storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury. There was a violent wind, as well as thunder, and either one or the other split a tree off at the corner of the building; a huge bough fell across the roof, and knocked down a portion of the easy chimney-stack, sending a clatter of stones and soot into the kitchen fire (W.H. 96).

The storm completely takes over the narrative and plot that had previously been occurring. The sense of losing control is a concept that closely connects with the supernatural element. The strength signified in the storm overpowers most, if not all, of the concreteness that Joseph's words hold and, instead of dismissing what he says, Brontë represents how supernatural triumphs are signifying the fact that although both entities are able to exist, one is stronger than the other. There is only one other time Heaven is mentioned in the novel: when Catherine is confessing to Nelly her love for Heathcliff once Linton asks her to marry him. Catherine goes into a complete frenzy and tells Nelly the story of a dream she once had. She explains the dream to Nelly:

I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I've no business to marry

Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there, had not brought Heathcliff so low I shouldn't have thought of it. (W.H. 91).

In this passage, Cathy is talking to Nelly about how she ended up coming to Wuthering Heights. It also represents her feelings on marrying Linton. She indicates that it would not be in her character to marry him, similarly to how it wouldn't be right for her to be in Heaven. This signifies Cathy's feelings on her inability to understand where she belongs. It is not, however, similar to Joseph's speeches on religion, which involve spreading the word of Christ and believing in all that his religion signifies. This differentiation is a vital detail in better understanding the outlying nature that both Heathcliff and Catherine have compared to the other characters in the novel, the two both invoking a deep sense and understanding of the power of nature. As we'll see in the next chapter, when these two acknowledge this presence and embrace it themselves within their own characters, a new character is able to be introduced to the novel and take form: the character of nature itself.

Chapter 2: Heathcliff and Cathy: Characters Embedded in Nature

Who knows, but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors, and brought to England.

—Cathy to Heathcliff (65)

Cathy and Heathcliff embed themselves in nature. The two characters are both physically and mentally separated from the other characters in the novel and don't view themselves as people belonging to the world that they inhabit. One of the clearest examples of this is when they escape to the moors, further removing themselves from the entrapment of indoors. These two characters show recognition of a force that is beyond their control, gaining insight into the power of the natural world and the significance it has within the world they live in. The example in the previous chapter (when Cathy explains to Nelly how she was "kicked out of heaven" because she didn't belong) proves this and is significant to how she explains her feelings of not belonging at Wuthering Heights as well. Heathcliff has an unsolvable backstory from the moment he enters the world of the Earnshaws as a young boy. Mr. Earnshaw finds Heathcliff, an orphan, in town and decides to bring him home and help him by civilizing him amongst his family, including his other two children. Once Cathy and Heathcliff form a bond and become as close as they do, they both grow to represent a sense of otherness with respect to the world they grew up in, while also enabling a simultaneous oneness with the natural world. As the novel progresses, it becomes more evident that, while Cathy desires to be a part of the natural world, she cannot be separated

from her roots, the origin of her upbringing and family. Heathcliff is very different, however, and his origins are not only unknown at the novel's beginning but are never discovered by readers. His character, even more so than Cathy's at times, is so closely aligned with nature that he seems to be the only character who can actually survive in it, explaining why he is also one of the last characters in the novel to die. The two represent a force within nature, one that, even in death, cannot be overcome.

The other characters recognize the differences between Heathcliff and everyone else in the novel. The first thing Nelly tells Lockwood of the mysterious Heathcliff, "It's a cuckoo's, sir — I know all about it; except where he was born, and who were his parents, and how he got his money..." (W.H. 36). In the reference here, "cuckoo" refers to a mad person, a common identifier that the other characters associate with his character. Heathcliff's lack of origins, his ignorance as to where he is from, is a particularly troubling fact that returns throughout the novel. In Brontë's time, a person's background is especially significant because it defines most of what makes up a person's livelihood and identity in regards to class and social rank. This was due to money values and status, but even in today's world people have an increasing curiosity for finding out who they are, a sense of identity that comes with knowing where you and your name originated from. One of the more popular ways people attempt to discover their ancestry and origins today is from DNA kits and other genealogy methodologies that provide insight into where a person comes from and, by extension, who they are.

Heathcliff doesn't have, or at least doesn't show that he has access to such self-knowledge, and, instead, Brontë makes consistent references to his having animalistic roots rather than human ones. This relates closely to one particularity that Brontë herself is looking

closely at: the treatment of Heathcliff. Every character in the book seems to have an uneasiness about his character and how he goes about his life. The concept of Heathcliff being looked at as an animal rather than a human is actually less uncanny than it sounds. His character actively identifies with animal-like qualities; he always reverts back to nature when something obscene occurs, and it is especially obvious when he is angered or his emotions are heightened that his true roots come out. From the very beginning of the novel, when Mr. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff home to the family, according to Nelly, “Not a soul knew to whom it belonged...[Mr. Earnshaw] thought it better to take it home... he was determined he would not leave it as he found it” (W.H. 40-41). Heathcliff is in just this one example alone referred to as “it” rather than “he” three times. This exemplifies the uncertainty as to what he is—animal or human.

Nelly’s identification of Heathcliff continues, especially in regards to his effect on Cathy: “His [Heathcliff] peevish reproofs wakened in her a naughty delight to provoke him [Mr. Earnshaw]; she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words...” (W.H. 47). This example is showing Cathy beginning to gain a resistance to punishment, a quality that parallels that of Heathcliff. She begins to align herself with his own actions, transforming her character from an early age and furthering herself from a domestic upbringing.

Ivan Kreilkamp writes about “the animal” in all the Brontë sisters’ works; however, it is in *Wuthering Heights* where he sees the most clearly depicted image of an actual character as an animal—in the figure of Heathcliff. Kreilkamp argues that there is a deeper meaning behind “pethood, animality, and cruelty” that drives this novel forward in a way that recognizes the ethical and humanistic questions that Brontë brings forth in the novel. Kreilkamp argues that

Heathcliff is Brontë's "romantic hero" and the cruelty enforced on him sheds light on a larger scale, the history of human beings and biology. (Kreilkamp 90-91). For Kreilkamp, Heathcliff's status as animal in the novel raises bigger philosophical questions about the nature of humans and the relationships they have with one another:

Who is human? Who or what is a non-human, a thing or 'animal'? What living thing may be treated cruelly—or can a 'thing' or 'animal' be treated cruelly? (Does cruelty only obtain when the object is designated as human?) And how are 'sympathy' and 'cruelty', as two manifestations of passionate affect, linked? (Kreilkamp 91)

Kreilkamp highlights big, philosophical questions about how one can determine who is human, and how those considered inhuman should be treated and labelled. These thoughts and enquiries were examined by Brontë herself in the novel. She creates the character of Heathcliff as a human with animal-like qualities. The blurred divide between humanity and animality is Romantic in that it literalizes how closely Heathcliff is positioned with nature.

One way to look at the relationship between animals and nature in the novel is to look at Heathcliff as a child, before he is adopted into the Earnshaw home as an orphan, when he is still free from the imposition of domesticity. Mr. Earnshaw describes how he came to find Heathcliff and the description is similar to that of finding a dog on the street with no collar. Mr. Earnshaw being exhausted from fatigue from his journey, all that Nelly could make out about how Heathcliff was found was his saying: "It was a tale of his seeing it starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb in the streets of Liverpool where he picked it up and inquired for its owner" (W.H. 40). No one understands quite what to do with Heathcliff, this being indicated by labelling him "it" throughout the novel. After he is introduced and becomes a part of the family, however,

Heathcliff's natural instincts begin to shift, revealing the process that enables the change from wild to the domestication of his character. He is forced to adhere to the rules of the household and to act as a member of the family. Once Mr. Earnshaw dies, Heathcliff begins once again to show his natural tendencies, but this also is partially due to the way Hindley (the new head of the household) treats him as an inferior, making him sleep in the barn and do hard labor and work.

As the novel progresses, more characters begin to be aware that Heathcliff has begun to revert back to his animalistic tendencies through nature. When Isabella, Heathcliff's new wife, escapes from Wuthering Heights and is telling Nelly how awful her living situation has been, she states,

“He's not a human being.” she retorted; “and he has no claim on my charity—I gave him my heart, and he took and pinched it to death; and flung it back to me— people feel with their hearts, Ellen, and since he has destroyed mine, I have not power to feel for him, and I would not, though he groaned from this, to his dying day; and wept tears of blood for Catherine” (W.H. 197).

This is one of the later references in the novel to Heathcliff's not actually being a human.

Isabella immediately recognizes in the first sentence that Heathcliff is more demonic and rabid than human; going even further to give examples of how human beings wouldn't act in the ways that he did. Before revealing this to Nelly, it is important to note that Isabella had to actually “escape” Wuthering Heights and run all the way to Thrushcross Grange, two miles away. Isabella is also suggesting here that the only way that Heathcliff can be calmed down or is happiest is when he is with Cathy. Isabella is not the only character who thinks this. Another example shortly after this conversation between the two ladies is when Nelly is explaining to Edgar

(Cathy's husband) what happened to Heathcliff after Cathy's death: "He trampled on, and kicked you, and dashed you on the ground,' I whispered. 'And his mouth watered to tear you with his teeth; because he's only half a man —not so much'" (W.H. 206).

Although both of the two above examples occur later on in the novel, it is interesting to look at them in context with the beginning of the novel when Heathcliff is introduced to Lockwood, one of the most telling points in how Heathcliff's character is viewed by other characters—in this case, an unknown stranger. The first encounter between Lockwood and Heathcliff comes when Heathcliff's pack of dogs make an attack on Lockwood upon his entering Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff is able to get the dogs off of Lockwood. But what is most interesting about this scene is not that the dogs listen to their master and eventually recede from Lockwood, but rather that Heathcliff appears to take the role of the head of the pack. It is a reasonable way of perceiving the incident in light of animal tendencies, especially because Heathcliff himself is cold and unfriendly to Lockwood as well. After he calls the dogs to get off Lockwood he says, "The dogs do right to be vigilant" (W.H. 6), this signifying a sort of understanding Heathcliff has with his dogs. It is also no small coincidence either that the only time domesticated animals are seen at the home of Wuthering Heights is after Heathcliff takes control of the estate from Hindley Earnshaw.

The reference to dogs is one that is especially interesting in looking at Brontë's childhood. By comparing the dog that the Brontë family grew up with, and the character of Heathcliff, a close connection can be formed, suggesting how Emily came to the idea of creating her main character. Elizabeth Gaskell, in her book, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), refers to a scene in the children's childhood featuring Emily and the family's pet dog, Keeper. She

describes a particular incident where the dog was sleeping on the bed when he wasn't supposed to, provoking the following response from Emily:

"Charlotte saw Emily's whitening face, and set mouth, but dared not to speak to interfere; no one dared when Emily's eyes glowed in that manner... Down-stairs came Emily, dragging after her the unwilling Keeper... she "punished him" till his eyes were swelled up, and the half-blind, stupefied beast was led to his accustomed lair, to have his swelled head fomented and cared for by the very Emily herself" (Gaskell 215).

The cruelty expressed by Emily's treatment of this animal is uncanny. Gaskell describes this scene that is horrific to read, providing step by step details on the entirety of Emily's reaction to this dog disobeying her. The brutality expressed toward the dog, however, is overshadowed by the magnitude of Emily's response. She beat the dog up so much that it actually became half-blind just because the dog was sleeping on the bed. Gaskell highlights the anticlimactic reasoning behind why Emily is beating up of the dog, making readers feel sorry for the dog and also viewing Emily's response as extreme. The cruelty she shows parallels with Heathcliff's cruelty so that not only does Heathcliff embody the dog, but also Emily. One of the other aspects about this passage to note is the end of the story as Gaskell concludes saying: "He [Keeper] loved her dearly ever after; he walked first among the mourners to her funeral; he slept moaning for nights at the door of her empty room, and never, so to speak, rejoiced, dog fashion, after her death" (Gaskell 215). Emily eventually comforting the dog after the beating is representative as well in the novel with Cathy's constant frustration and arguments with Heathcliff, that later end in moments of compassion and love. This point should be recognized and associated with the unconditional love that the dog expressed even after the horrific beating it endured. It is

particularly resonant moment and can be looked at in regards to how cruel Heathcliff is to everyone in the novel except Cathy who, although she hurts Heathcliff by marrying someone else and neglecting him, retains his unconditional love for her until the end.

Cathy Earnshaw is another example of a character with close ties to nature but in a more developed way. Cathy's relationship with nature grows; it doesn't come to her as instinct; rather she develops a relationship with it but mainly because of Heathcliff. She is not portrayed, as Heathcliff is, as an animal. Rather, she is represented as the only other character who recognizes herself as one that thrives off being closely aligned with the natural world rather than the one in which she ends up: the wife of Edgar Linton at Thrushcross Grange. Cathy, from childhood, has a fascination with Heathcliff and a passion to put herself in a similar mindset and nature as her adopted step-brother. She doesn't possess the natural "instincts" that Heathcliff has; rather, she has the desire to align herself with nature and the power it holds. She seeks to better understand Heathcliff and where he comes from, but, even more so, she wants to be in a world that only she and Heathcliff can share and be a part of. Cathy desires to be as absorbed as Heathcliff is in nature, but it isn't something that comes as instinct to her. Heathcliff is different in how he doesn't desire these qualities, however; he aligns himself with them in a way of viewing himself. These qualities are a part of him.

What is most interesting about the character of Cathy is her continual struggle with who she most wants to align herself with. It is clear that she wants the rich and elegant lifestyle of the Lintons, but in her heart she seems to understand that she is not that girl, that she belongs with Heathcliff. Consider again the moment when she declares her love for Heathcliff to Nelly when comparing the two, Edgar and Heathcliff. The important aspect to note in this case, however, is

not her comparison of the two men but the concluding sentence, when she states, “Nelly I *am* Heathcliff— he’s always, always in my mind— not as pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but, as my own being—so, don’t talk of our separation again—it is impracticable” (W.H. 93). Cathy identifies with Heathcliff both in mind and body. Although she doesn’t relate to him in his animalistic tendencies, she relates to him with respect to his identity. Cathy sees herself in Heathcliff and so she associates her own feelings and her own being to his. The passage represents not only how closely aligned Cathy is with Heathcliff, but that she goes even further to suggest that the two are actually inseparable. It is also important to note that when Cathy aligns herself with Heathcliff, her ties with nature are both present and more easily identifiable.

Cathy may not be an animal, but she possesses an inner violence and a devilish nature. One of the earlier examples of this is when she is with Nelly and begins to pinch her. It is not simply the pinch that is important, rather what Nelly says of her in response: “‘I didn’t touch you, you lying creature!’ cried she, her fingers tingling to repel the act, and her ears red with rage. She never had power to conceal her passion, it always set her whole complexion in a blaze” (W.H. 80). Cathy’s inner fury is yet another similarity to the passion that she shares with Heathcliff, and Nelly recognizes this. She describes the reaction Cathy had as her “passion,” relating to the idea that Cathy herself desires some of the same characteristics as Heathcliff. The two both lack human qualities such as compassion and empathy, but, as Kreilkamp suggests, compassion and empathy are not only human emotions. The way Cathy and Heathcliff present these two emotions is more animalistic, in that they show these emotions only to each other, only worrying about themselves. The two also possess qualities such as fight or flight and protecting

themselves that completely take over their characters whenever something happens that they do not approve of or feel passionate about. The above instance with Cathy and Nelly occurs when Edgar Linton is over, and this is vital because Cathy's true side (the one which associates itself with nature) emerges when she feels torn between Heathcliff and Edgar.

The complexities of Heathcliff and Cathy reveal how the concept of "control" operates in the novel. None of the characters seems to really have any control over what is going on in their day to day lives. There is a supernatural control of the world of this novel that is, at times, exclusively represented through nature. Heathcliff and Cathy, however, do have moments throughout the novel where they show that they have the most control out of any of the other characters. For Heathcliff, he goes from being the orphan adopted into the family to the one who ends up being the head of the household and owning the entire estate of Wuthering Heights. His ability to adapt to changes and use his skills to get what he wants is most evident in this example. When looking at his character in the novel it would seem he would have the least control with his being associated as an animal, and yet whenever he is discussed he is always composed and carries himself well. It is only when Cathy is mentioned or around that he will lose his control. Cathy is different in that—although she possesses many of the same characteristics of Heathcliff's character and wants to put herself in the same mindset and understanding as him—her upbringing and family ties restrain her. Although she has more control over her life than any character besides Heathcliff, she only gets a partial view of the control and force that nature holds firm for the entirety of the novel. Heathcliff and Cathy are products of the effect of the natural world along with the force of the supernatural that is brought forth in the novel, but even they have limited access to the power of nature.

Chapter 3: Nature as a Character and a View of the Pastoral

Reading *Wuthering Heights* while recognizing the importance of nature should, by now, be thought of as essential. The importance of nature however, goes even further than this once we recognize Brontë's ability to anthropomorphize nature. Brontë assigns human-like qualities within the natural landscape and descriptions of nature. By doing this, she is also creating a separation between the two homes in the novel, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Bronte differentiates Wuthering Heights as part a pastoral world within the novel, dismissing notions of domesticity and Victorian ideals. The opening scene of the novel begins *en medias res*, with a snow storm completely overtaking the world that this novel is situated in, forcing the novel's first narrator, Mr. Lockwood, to retreat to Wuthering Heights. The reader is thrown into the storm that all the characters are faced with. Mr. Lockwood feels a growing desperate need to escape to safety when the storm begins. He states,

On that bleak hill top the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made me shiver through every limb. Being unable to remove the chain, I jumped over, and running up the flagged causeway bordered with straggling gooseberry bushes, knocked vainly for admittance, till my knuckles tingled and the dogs howled (W.H. 8).

The description that Lockwood is giving of both the natural landscape and Wuthering Heights is representative of his own character. There is a reluctance that is expressed in most of what Lockwood says, and this quotation in particular echoes the fear and uncertainty that he has. This fear especially drives his character, for example when he says "till my knuckles tingled" indicating how hard he must have been knocking trying to gain admittance, doing whatever

possible to get inside the house. The description he gives of nature and his surroundings is also an indicator of how he feels about the landscape, calling it “black” and saying it “made me shiver through every limb.” The effect the natural world and the landscape has on the characters is evident; however, it is equally necessary to recognize the voice Brontë assigns to nature. Brontë is purposely giving nature a role in this novel—in particular, the role of an emerging character. By creating this character, Brontë is representing the ability nature has to coexist with all of the other characters in the novel, even possess some similar qualities. Reading nature as a character gives clarity as to why *Wuthering Heights* can more successfully be deemed a continuance of Romantic thought.

As I argued in Chapter 2, Cathy and Heathcliff both recognize themselves as either products of or attachments to the natural landscape in the novel. The two coexist with the natural world, such that it becomes difficult to recognize one without the other. Brontë’s language describing Cathy and Heathcliff is synonymous with that of the natural world, making it at times difficult to decipher exactly who it is she is speaking of. One of the most obvious examples is the one previously looked at when Mr. Lockwood is going to Wuthering Heights to seek shelter from the storm. The specific words used when describing nature and the storm become interchangeable with Heathcliff: “On that bleak hill top of the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made me shiver through every limb” (W.H. 8). This description echoes that of Heathcliff when, only a few pages earlier, Lockwood states how Heathcliff, upon first meeting him, is said to have “black eyes” (W.H. 1). Brontë purposely assigns similar language and dialect to her characters, especially Heathcliff and the natural landscape. Later, when Nelly describes Heathcliff she says, “A half-civilized ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows, and eyes full of

black fire” (W.H. 109). The repetition of the word “black” is purposeful; Brontë returns to this descriptor throughout the novel when characterizing Heathcliff. The blackness attached to Heathcliff’s character is equally as important as the darkness that the novel is surrounded with in respect to the landscape and nature. Looking at the name “Wuthering Heights” exemplifies this: ““Wuthering”” as Lockwood explains, “being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed, in stormy weather” (W.H. 2). Brontë insists that the natural landscape and the characters in this novel coexist with and recognize each other in such a way that the line separating humans and nature is diminished. Nature’s emergence as a character and an equal to all other characters in the novel, especially Cathy and Heathcliff, brings up a key question to be considered: Is Brontë making Nature and the natural landscape more human or is she making Cathy and Heathcliff inhuman? As I will argue, the first possibility far surpasses the second. A Nature more aligned with human-like qualities is a valid and necessary way to read this novel, a way that also highlights the supernatural and sublime eeriness that encompasses the entirety of the book.

The concept of mortality versus immortality and who in the novel acquires which is essential in better grasping the magnitude of Brontë’s emphasis on nature in the novel. Margaret Homans in her essay, “Repression and Sublimation of Nature in Wuthering Heights,” looks closely at the effects that the characters in the novel have when not acknowledging the power of nature and the importance of it to the lives of each character, specifically Cathy and Heathcliff:

A characteristic figurative use of nature, often cited as evidence for the presence of “real” nature in the novel, is the device of employing a natural object as a metaphor for character, almost with the force of a metonymy or a symbol, in that frequently the

natural object substitutes syntactically for the person described...Instead of associating nature with the force of the literal, she [Brontë] associates it with that which is purely nonliteral, her invented characters. (Homans 12-16)

Homans is here magnifying the effort that Brontë makes in her ground-breaking ambiguity in regards to what and who nature is in this novel. She recognizes Brontë's writing style and how it allows for a blurred line with respect to the language dispensed to both character and nature. As Homans suggests, this is purposeful on the part of Brontë. In highlighting the natural landscape as both an entity and a tool to better outline the characters in the novel, the relationship of both character and nature enmeshes to represent nature as a character itself. One of the ways to see this goes back to what Homans outlines in her argument. Homans points out an uncertainty amongst all the characters, Cathy and Heathcliff specifically, in how much uncertainty there is in recognizing what is "real" in the novel. In other words, the ambiguity that Brontë dedicates to specific details regarding characters and nature is revolutionary to the Romantic thought and aesthetic ideas she's responding to. The uncertainty in this novel can be viewed as a symbol to the ultimate forces of nature. I argue that the novel goes much further than just outlining the associations that nature and character have, as Homans suggests; rather, I aim to represent the anthropomorphic tendencies that nature uses to overtake this novel and all of the other characters in it.

In better understanding the significance of nature as a character in the novel, there are two ways to approach Brontë's language. The first is to indicate the moments that the voice of nature emerges from the mouths of the characters. The other way is to recognize when descriptions of the natural world take over anything else of importance in the novel. The first

example of this is when Lockwood first comes to Wuthering Heights; he is given the room of the late Cathy Linton-Earnshaw to spend the night in. The room is described broadly, but it is clear the room was Cathy's with the "few mildewed books piled up in the corner" and all the inscribed belongings of Catherine Earnshaw dispersed everywhere with dates "some quarter of a century back" (W.H. 20-21). Lockwood goes about the room, looking around before he begins to fall asleep. What is interesting to note is the way in which he falls asleep. He isn't simply taking a nap; rather it can be viewed as the character spiraling into a more supernatural state of mind, especially evident when he exclaims "In vapid listlessness I leant my head against the window, and continued spelling over Catherine Earnshaw—Heathcliff—Linton, till my eyes closed; but they has not rested five minutes when a glare of white letters started from the dark, as vivid as specters—the air swarmed with Catherines" (W.H. 20-21). There is an immediate connection to air and wind as the two are present simultaneously while Lockwood is living this moment of confused ecstasy. Going one step further, it becomes clear that nature is not only present but emerging as a character itself. Air is not only related to natural phenomena but also to human phenomena—essential to human beings' ability to live and, in this instance, used as a means of breath for Lockwood in relation to Cathy. The trilateral effect that this one passage has—air, wind, and breath all coexist in only four lines of this novel, and yet so much is occurring. It is no coincidence that this is all occurring with the presence of the supernatural, another force that is present in relation to nature throughout the novel. The supernatural presence is represented throughout the previous example with Lockwood when he is attempting to close the window with the storm outside. After he breaks the glass to stop the branch from the tree from hitting the window, he instead latches onto something else, "instead of which, my fingers closed on the

fingers of a little, ice-cold hand!” (W.H. 27). Brontë doesn’t clearly state the dynamic between character, the role of nature, and the supernatural. Rather, she chooses to subtly engage the three in a way that weaves them together.

I’ve argued that nature at times operates through characters. The second way to view nature is in the continual comparison that occurs when Brontë brings up Cathy and Heathcliff. This has already been seen in many of the examples given in the previous chapters, but another example is earlier on in the novel when Cathy is comparing Linton and Heathcliff:

Doubtless Catherine marked the difference between her friends as one came in, and the other went out. The contrast resembled what you see in exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country, for a beautiful fertile valley; and his voice, and greeting were as opposite as his aspect— (W.H. 79).

A Romantic lens asks us to notice how natural descriptions are brought up specifically whenever Heathcliff or Cathy are being discussed, in addition to the more mysterious and unclear descriptions being attributed to Heathcliff. This example marks a different way of identifying Nature, in a more transient and less obvious way. Brontë is able to show the flexibility that nature and character description has. There is purposefully not a specific language used when describing nature and another language used when describing the characters because the two are so closely aligned and embedded in one another. Brontë purposely diminishes the polarization between naturalistic dialect and character dialect (especially that of Cathy and Heathcliff) because, as I suggest, the two are the same. Nature anthropomorphized as a character in this novel begins with the dialect and description that Brontë assigns to both nature and characters.

The emphasis in this example represents the inevitability that if either the characters or nature didn't exist, then neither would the other in the world of this novel.

One of the other crucial details that Brontë represents in her novel is the specific times in the novel where nature is seen and described. The character of nature is only present when at Wuthering Heights rather than Thrushcross Grange. Whenever there are scenes at the Grange, the descriptions are almost always indoors and without the description of nature. This is an interesting dynamic because the entirety of the novel spans between the two homes that are only two miles apart from each other, and both the character of nature and the descriptions of the natural landscape are only mentioned when in Wuthering Heights. Brontë's association of Wuthering Heights with the natural world is closely aligned with a literary form known as the pastoral. The pastoral marks a world that is unreachable to most and where ideas and possibilities are limitless. The pastoral is also meant to be a representation of a place where aspects of everyday life can be romanticized and no one will question anything about circumstances not considered as everyday occurrences. In the case of Brontë's novel, there is a clear distinction between the two landscapes. This novel is unique, however, in how much insight the reader is given into the pastoral world. In other novels and plays, for example, there is little to no description of this world, only comments on its existence and a specific character's ability to come and go whenever they please. William Empson has done extensive research and scholarship on the concept of the pastoral and how it is situated as a tool in literature: "In pastoral, you take a limited life and pretend it is the full and normal one, and a suggestion that one must do this with all life, not because the normal is itself limited, is easily put into the trick though not necessary to its power" (Empson 110). Empson is here suggesting that there is never

going to be complete clarity in the pastoral world. It is meant for interpretation and comparison due to the nature of its existence. It will always be compared to the other world that is being represented, and there must always be another world. There then arises a representation of the differences from the two. In respect to *Wuthering Heights*, the conclusion can be drawn that Thrushcross Grange is the deemed “normal” life and Wuthering Heights is the “pretend” world, in regards to its limitations and supernatural presence. There is a clear indication that the two settings are completely different; both reader and all the characters in the novel are able to go to Wuthering Heights, but only Cathy and Heathcliff are able to grasp the weight of significance that the estate holds in respect to nature.

One of the more interesting points in regards to the pastoral in Brontë’s novel is a sense of impossibility and restraint that some of the characters face trying to fully situate themselves in Wuthering Heights. Sean Broome investigates the concept of the “rural” in the novel. If Wuthering Heights is the “rural,” as Broome suggests, Thrushcross Grange represents the civilized. The term rural in Broome’s case is closely related with the pastoral. The two form a relationship in this novel in that both work toward better depicting the isolation and the differences that Wuthering Heights represents from Thrushcross Grange. Broome writes, “if nature is radically other, unknowable, and set apart from humanity, then so is the rural” (Broome 121). Broome’s notion implies that the rural is “set apart from humanity.” While I do not completely agree with this point, due to the fact that there is clearly a representation of humanity in Wuthering Heights, I find that Broome’s argument distinguishing between the two landscapes and homes is valid. There is clearly a difference between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross

Grange and, without completely dismissing the one and validating the other, I find it important to recognize the major differences the two have.

It is no mistake that Brontë sets the entirety of the novel between these two places. The two can be understood not just as different places but as figuratively existing in different worlds. In looking at Wuthering Heights as the “other” and an uncanny representation of a world unknown, Thrushcross Grange is given more of a “normative” idea of a home at this time period. There are references to the grange having extravagant parties, scenes of Cathy doing needlepoint, and beautiful (if very cultivated) gardens. Wuthering Heights, just two miles away, sheds light on a very different lifestyle, one that has no similarities to that of Thrushcross, it thus not having the domestic qualities that the other possess. The two homes signify the difference between Victorian ideals and thoughts as compared to Romantic-era ideals and thoughts—Thrushcross being the Victorian, Wuthering Heights the Romantic. This explains the uncanniness and otherness that completely possesses the home of Wuthering Heights. Instead of Wuthering Heights being located outside of humanity, as Broome is suggesting, Wuthering Heights should be looked at as an invitation for humanity to embrace nature. In Brontë’s ability to create an accessible pastoral abode in this novel, she is revolutionizing the way otherness, mystery, and the supernatural can and should be read. Brontë places the pastoral in close proximity to the civilized, opening a realm that has yet to be discovered, but that is represented and is open to discovery.

Brontë blurs the line between humanity and the natural world, encouraging the two to become one. The coexistence of nature and humanity working together, Brontë suggests, is stronger than when the two are apart. From the very beginning of the novel until its conclusion, Brontë guides the two main characters to a mindset and a lifestyle that represents the endless

possibilities of the world if one is able to alter one's mindset and embrace the natural world. She highlights an appreciation for the coexistence of the two entities rather than a denial or a resistance.

Conclusion:

Emily Brontë wrote *Wuthering Heights* around the age of 27, and it was the only novel she ever wrote. She died only one year after the book's publication from complications from tuberculosis. She, like her two sisters, wrote under a pseudonym, Emily's being "Ellis Bell." The novel was published in a three volume set along with her sister Anne's novel *Agnes Grey*. Due to the obvious differences between her own and her sisters' novels, it is not surprising *Wuthering Heights* was welcomed with immediate criticism and dislike. Many readers felt it was an immoral and absurd novel with no valid connections to real life. This is important to recognize because, as I've argued throughout this thesis, Emily was not intending to create a realistic novel. She was creating a novel that was unlike any others published during this time. Instead of a realistic depiction of everyday life, like the one her sister published alongside *Wuthering Heights*, Emily created a more gothic and romantically-driven novel that brought up questions much bigger than the social and political normalcies of the time. The novel—from the time of its publication to the present day—has left a harrowing and thrilling imprint on all its readers, making it one of the most popular novels in the English language.

Through her vivid use of nature and the natural landscape, readers are transformed in more ways than one in how they read not only Brontë's novel, but novels in general. The persistent presence of nature seen in a number of manifestations encourages a specific way of reading this novel. Readers are invited to get glimpses of the forces that overtake the world that all the characters reside in, but they themselves are thrown into this world as well. Brontë encourages her readers to seek a world where the answers are not always known, and, by doing

this, she opens the door to new possibilities and answers. Instead of running away from the uncertainties of the world, Brontë encourages readers to embrace and even love them. She experiments with duality, allowing more than one entity to preside in the world of her novel, as was seen with both religion and the supernatural. The complexity of this relationship is not only successfully represented, but Brontë goes even further to answer how it is possible that the two can exist in one world. One representation of this is the alignment between nature and character and the relationship that is formed through the reoccurring supernatural presence in the novel. This is not the only revolutionary idea brought forward; I argue that the emphasis placed on nature and the natural world is represented in a light that produces a new way of reading through the Romantic lens. Brontë insists that nature should be seen as a form of identity, an idea looked at extensively in the novel through the characters of Cathy and Heathcliff. Brontë produces a lens that she encourages her readers to look into, furthering their understanding of what a world would look like were nature equal to human existence.

My goal in approaching this novel through a Romantic lens was to get a perspective on the novel that hadn't previously been examined closely. Much of my research was founded on the complexities of the characters and the engrained romantic relationship of Cathy and Heathcliff that results from the plot that drives this novel. This novel insists through the depiction and role of nature that there is more than one way to view the romantic relationships that occupy this novel, inviting other forces such as the supernatural to play a role as well. Brontë's power and unrelenting dedication to creating a world that had never been seen before welcomes readers into a novel that is distinguishable from anything else previously written. My hope is that after having read my argument and after reading Brontë's novel, readers will be

refreshed with a new recognition of the potential that this writing has. Emily Brontë paved the way for a deep-rooted understanding of a world unknown. In her determination to see what isn't always there, she created a novel that completely shifted literary writing, a shift that manifests the way in which both character and nature can and should be read.

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